

Explain the concept of Human Rights in Islamic thought in specification of 'Status of women in Islam'.

1) Introduction -

Human rights in Islam lay the foundation of a just social order. No other religion elaborates human rights as Islam does. In its bid to clarify the rights (and duties) of each and every member of the society, it lays special stress on women rights, granting them special status vis-a-vis men. Islam grants special status to women when it comes to their spiritual equality, social, economic and political status. This status also demands certain roles and responsibilities from women.

2) Concept of Human Rights in Islam:-

Human Rights in Islam lay the groundwork for a just social order where every member of the society gets due rights while also fulfilling their duties too. Commenting on the nature of human rights in Islam, Maulana Maududi says:-

"It may be clarified at the outset that when we speak of human rights in Islam, we mean that that these rights have been granted by Allah (SWT)."

He proceeds to say that, in view of this concept, anyone who denies these rights is a lawbreaker (fasiq).

3) Basic Ethical Principles that Lay the Foundation of HR in Islam-

Before we delve deeper into the human rights ~~granted~~ granted

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to women in Islam, it would be beneficial to look at the basic principles of HR in Islam. According to Dr. Anis Ahmad, these ethical principles are

i) Unity of Life

The principle seeks unity in cosmos, society, family life and religious life (Tauheed).

ii) Value of Equity (Adl)

This principle teaches equity to self, parents, spouses and children and even to strangers

iii) Protection of Life

This principle sanctifies life and prohibits humans to infringe this right.

iv) Religious Freedom

This principle seeks social order and prohibits all to discriminate on the basis of religion

v) Value of Intellect (Aql)

This principle seeks responsible conduct and better judgement in the conduct of worldly affairs

vi) Protection of Honour, Dignity and Lineage

This principle protects the sanctity of family life and seeks rights for children.

vii) Sanctity of Ownership and Property (Maal)

This principle seeks just economic order and wants equal economic rights for all.

4) HR with Special Status for Women:-

When it comes to the status of women in Islam, we find that Islam is the only religion that grants them rights equal to women, without imposing

equal responsibilities in many aspects. Keeping in view the principles laid before, let's take a look at the status of women in Islam.

a) Spiritual Equality of Men and Women

Spiritually both men and women have been granted equal status. In Surah - al-Baqra, we find that both man and women were held responsible for Adam's first mistake and both were forgiven at the same time.

Allah will turn in mercy to believing men and believing women; Allah is Most forgiving, ever merciful (Al-Ahzab)

b) Equal Economic Rights (without imposition of equal responsibilities) :-

When it comes to her rights in the economic realm, woman is entitled to her property, any wealth she earns or procures. She is entitled to get maintenance (Qiwama) from her husband and has full rights over her contractual sum (Mehr).

للرجال مما آتتسبوا وللنساء مما آتتسبن (Al-Nisa)

"Man shall have a portion of what they earn and women shall have a portion of what they earn."

c) Political Rights of Women:-

As far as her political rights are concerned, Islam allows women to contest elections, take part in public affairs and even assume political office. A clear example here is the case of Syeda Sharifa Fatima, who was allowed to

be the governor of Najran and Yemen for a long time during Caliphate of Hazrat Umar (RA).

d) Rights of Women as a Wife and as a Daughter:-

In the realm of home, women are granted a position of superiority over men and while she manages her home and children, man is to provide for her and protect her.

الرجال قوامون على النساء (Al-Nisa: 34)

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women.

Regarding the status of daughters, we find ahadees like:-

"Whoever supports two daughters till they mature, he and I will come together in the Day of Judgement like this (used two fingers to show closeness)."

e) Elevated Status of Mothers:-

Status of women is further elevated as their role as mother.

In Surah Luqman, Allah says:

وَوَعَيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بُولًا رِيًّا (Al-Luqman: 4)

And we have enjoined man to be kind to his parents; His mother bears him in weakness upon weakness.

5) Conclusion:-

Islam is a religion that grants equal rights to women as it does to a man. All the rights that grants to women ensure the creation of a society that distributes rights and responsibilities equally among all members of society.

66 The emancipation of women was a project dear to the Prophet's (PBUH) heart."

— Karen Armstrong in
Islam: A Short History.